

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
COMFORT SUITES, BISMARCK ND

January 19, 2007  
1:00pm

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jenson. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Roll Call:

Present:

Daryl Beard	John Hanson	Jerry Meske
Carl Bloomquist	Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby
Wally Buckingham	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Lee Finstad	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Jerry Goll		

Absent:

Arnold Maier	Dave Vandergon
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Guests:

Mark Johnson, Administrator, ND Veterans Home

***Motion by Dean Overby to accept November 3 & 4, 2006 meeting minutes, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed.***

Speakers:

Peggy Wheelden, VA Public Affairs Officer [HANDOUT]

► Community Based Outpatient Clinics: in Dickinson, the providers are credentialed and training is scheduled and in Jamestown, a contract is finalized for space.

- ▶ In the process of hiring for a Native American mobile van for mental health care on reservations.
- ▶ Operation Iraqi and Enduring Freedom coordinator – Deb Kunkel, (701) 239-3787
- ▶ Over 1,300 veterans enrolled in November 2006
- ▶ Budget is on a continuing resolution, the proposed budget is at \$104 - \$107 million.

MG David Sprynczynatyk, Adjutant General, ND Nat'l Guard [HANDOUT]

- ▶ Mobilization Fact Sheet

Informational update on mobilization and deployment of the Guard throughout the world.

- ▶ 2007 –2009 Initiatives

**Tuition Assistance** - \$2 million dollars needed for goal of 100% tuition assistance. Schools waive 25% of tuition and the Guard pays the remaining 75% with state or federal dollars. Good tool for recruiting and retention.

**Veterans Bonus Program** - discussion on why active duty does not receive bonus.

**State Funding for Social Workers** – federal funding can no longer be used so general funding sought to keep this service going.

**Child Custody** – Because of deployment, soldiers are finding the custody arrangement is being changed. The Guard feels the soldiers should not be penalized because they are deployed.

**Recruiting & Retention** – shortage of junior officers

**Funeral Protest Restrictions** – Passed in the House and headed to the Senate.

- ▶ The economic impact of the military in North Dakota is estimated at \$1 billion dollars a year.

Tim Nolz, State Veterans Program Administrator, Job Service North Dakota

Larry Anderson, Director-Unemployment Insurance & Workforce Programs

- ▶ National Emergency Grant - \$1 million dollars to North Dakota to assist in the impact of the cutbacks on Grand Forks Air Force Base.
- ▶ Crisis in workforce – lowest unemployment rate in nation (under 3%) and high labor participation rate (72.5%) along with aging population is resulting in a shortage of workers.
- ▶ Governor's goal is to increase annual average wage in North Dakota.
- ▶ Two new veterans representatives hired, one in Minot and one in Fargo

Kelly Schmidt, ND State Treasurer [HANDOUT]

- ▶ Report on Postwar Trust Fund

**Veterans' Home Report** – Mark Johnson, Administrator

Presentation on status of Veterans Home – Brad Maasjo & Mark Johnson.

Life Safety issues at the Home have necessitated requesting funds for major renovations at the Home or, preferably, a new Veterans Home. Presentation outlined plans for building on the grounds.

**Workforce Development Council Update** – Lyle Schuchard.

We have a position on the Planning Committee. The Talent Initiative Program recognizes veterans as a targeted group. The Program is to increase skills so veterans can get into better employment positions. Various sources will be contacted to get information needed for the program. P-16 Education Workforce recommends: all-day kindergarten, school attendance to a minimum 183 days from 173 days, and raising high school graduation requirements to 25 credits from the current minimum of 21. The tougher requirements would include four years of language arts and four years of math.

Committee recessed for subcommittee meetings.

January 20, 2007      8:00am

Committee reconvened.

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jenson. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Roll Call:

Present:

Daryl Beard  
Carl Bloomquist  
Wally Buckingham  
Lee Finstad  
Jerry Goll

John Hanson  
Dave Hilleren  
Rudy Jenson  
Orletta Kilen

Jerry Meske  
Dean Overby  
Lyle Schuchard  
Gary Skarphol

Absent:

Arnold Maier

Dave Vandergon

Arnold Maier submitted his resignation to the Chairman. No replacement will be made at this time since Mr. Maier's term expires June 30, 2007.

**Subcommittee on Department of Veterans Affairs – Gary Skarphol, Chairman**  
**Commissioner's Update**

The budget hearing went well. Tom Summers accepted the Veterans Benefit Specialist position. Update on bills submitted at the Legislative Assembly.

**Grant Hardship Program**  
**Grant Policy #600**

***Motion by Daryl Beard that "An applicant who has an outstanding delinquent Veterans Aid Loan is eligible for the Grant Program.", second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Daryl Beard to approve denture procedure grant (extractions & dentures) for \$3000, regular dental grant to remain at \$1000, and the yearly cap be raised to \$3,000, effective May 1, 2007 second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Dean Overby to approve out-of-state training for Tom Summers, second by Wally Buckingham. Motion passed unanimously.***

Commissioner's evaluation completed. The evaluation committee is still working on issues within the department.

***Motion by Daryl Beard to accept subcommittee report, second by Jerry Goll. Motion passed.***

**Budget Committee – Lyle Schuchard**  
**No action required**

***Motion by Wally Buckingham, second by Jerry Meske to accept report. Motion passed.***

**Postwar Trust Fund Committee – Wally Buckingham**  
**Recommendations of committee presented.**

***Motion by Gary Skarphol to obligate an additional \$2,000 for Veterans Home promotional video, second by Lee Finstad. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Carl Bloomquist to obligate \$7,500 for ACOVA travel this legislative session, second by Dean Overby. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Dean Overby to obligate an additional \$45,000 for transportation vans, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Gary Skarphol to transfer \$50,000 to the Reserve Fund with an additional \$50,000 to be transferred June 30, 2007, second by Jerry Meske. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by John Hanson to accept report, Dean Overby second. Motion passed unanimously.***

Appeals Committee – Dean Overby

Appeal heard on Friday, January 18 at the Bismarck Branch Office. The committee overturned the department's decision based on additional information that determined the applicant is an eligible veteran.

***Motion by Gary Skarphol to accept report, second by Jerry Goll. Motion passed unanimously.***

Legislative Committee – Lee Finstad

All bills agreed upon by ACOVA and Coordinating Council have been submitted.

Additional Bills

HB 1437 – crime to steal identity of someone in the military

***Motion by Daryl Beard that the Administrative Committee support HB 1437, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed unanimously.***

HB 1479 – Administrative Practices Act

***Motion by Daryl Beard that the Administrative Committee not support HB 1479, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed unanimously.***

HB 1425 – Special Funds be used before General Funds (Veterans Home)

***Motion by Daryl Beard that the Administrative Committee support HB 1455, second by Carl Bloomquist. Motion passed unanimously.***

HB 1418 – Military Retirement Pay be exempt from North Dakota tax

***Motion by Lyle Schuchard that the Administrative Committee support HB 1418, second by Rudy Jenson. Motion passed 9 yeas, 4 nays (Beard, Bloomquist, Buckingham, Goll) [MOTION #1]***

HB 1291 – Increasing Death Benefit for North Dakota Soldier

***Motion by Carl Bloomquist that the Administrative Committees support HB 1291, second by Daryl Beard. Motion passed unanimously.***

HB 1510 – ND Nat'l Guard to participate in NDPERS Health Insurance Program

***Motion by Wally Buckingham that the Administrative Committee support HB 1510, second by Carl Bloomquist. Motion passed unanimously.***

SB 2244 – Military people serving in ND that have out of state plates exempt from license fees.

***Motion by Daryl Beard to table action on SB 2244, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed unanimously.***

Department of Veterans Affairs – Bob Hanson

Legislative Bill Update [HANDOUTS]

Operational Plan / Strategic Plan being implemented.

Information on World War II Memorial Flight. Donations being sought to send World War II veterans to Washington DC to see the WWII Memorial. Applications are available for interested veterans.

Discussion on issues being worked on in the Department. The committee's support for the claims position in Fargo was reiterated. The topic of conservatorships/guardianships within the department discussed.

Jerry Meske & Lyle Schuchard reported on the meeting with Adjustant General regarding a bonus appeal process. The General was open to the idea. Information on the appeal process will be sent to the committee.

Committee members encouraged to attend the budget hearing of the Department and the Veterans Home.

Next meeting:

April 20 & 21, 2007, Bismarck, Comfort Suites

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Lyle Schuchard  
Secretary